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dry bones of these subjects that we offer to our children; the life and soul have all been squeezed out of them first. What is commonly taught of them in our public elementary schools is much worse than nothing at all. All that really matters in such studies—the enlargement of the vision, the quickening of interest in the manifold life of the world, the appeal to the sympathetic emotions—is too often crowded out to make room for the memorizing of epitomes and barren records of events, of formulas and dogmas and catechisms, which to the children is only meaningless and irksome taskwork. In our ill-judged haste to initiate them into what we rightly consider to be the most humanizing subjects of study, we offer them the husks in place of the kernel; when they ask for bread, we give them a stone. No greater disservice can be done to any subject than to associate it in the minds of the learners with tedium and obscurity and compulsion. And if the danger of thus creating a lasting distaste is to be feared in the case of History and Literature, surely it is infinitely more serious when it is a question of the cultivation of the feelings on which the whole conduct of life immediately depends.

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### ABOUT CONSCIENCE.

It has often been thought that conscience is a sort of disturbing and somewhat supernatural force in human life, nagging and warning man. Men imagine that they would probably be more comfortable without conscience. The fact is that conscience is one of the great normal life forces, without which man's life as man would cease. To be without conscience or moral sense would be very much the same as to be without the sense of hunger or thirst, or without the power to feel pain. We recall that the most subtle peril of death is when a man, freezing in the cold, becomes insensible, or a drowning man loses consciousness.

Conscience, however, is not a negative sense ; it is positive and constructive. It is like all the other modes of our consciousness. Hunger is on the whole more pleasurable than painful ; the sense of hearing, while it warns us and admits discord, is the avenue of music and thought. So conscience in the normal or natural man is the doorway of all his highest satisfactions. Thus, there is a rare pleasure in recognizing moral distinctions, and much more in expressing them. As the artist expresses on his canvas the differences, the contrasts and the harmonies of a landscape, so man through his moral sense sees, and takes joy in uttering ideal judgments in all that wide field of life where social and moral relations hold good. It becomes as real a pleasure to satisfy conscience as to satisfy any other instinct or feeling. It is evidently as much more important to render this sort of satisfaction, as the field of moral conduct is wider than the scope of any other form of consciousness.

It is very suggestive that the word conscience by derivation involves the idea of kinship or comradeship. It is a social word. Could there be conscience at all in the case of a solitary being? What idea of right or wrong have you, except as your life is related to other lives? Even if you could think of your life only as related to the life of a Supreme Being or God, herein at once arises the social relation. You cannot do merely what it pleases you to do. You cannot be at ease while there is discord of will between you and another intelligent being.

Am I not bound, you may ask, even though quite alone, to be clean, pure and temperate. Are there no personal virtues? But these personal virtues, as they are called, take their moral color from our ideas of social conduct. The only way in which you can conceive of a solitary man in a solitary world is as he is imagined to be the survival of a race of men—a race of men too, who have worshiped. The personal virtues of such an imaginary man are really the survivals of virtues which were once related to social conduct. Thus cleanliness, purity, temperance, and specially honor and sincerity are never personal alone. All acts, thoughts and emotions characterize man as human, that is as social in a social universe. The law of his being is to recognize other beings. Has his brother aught

against him? The man is not the same man in the atmosphere of ill-will or disapproval as he was in the atmosphere of good-fellowship. Has a man ill-will towards another? He is so far out of accord with his world. So far as the flow of social goodwill is shut off from his life, he is isolated and he cannot be happy. Conscience is the name of the tie, or the force, which binds men socially, and (we venture to conceive) like a spiritual gravitation, draws them to the thought of a universal Life.

There has been widespread misapprehension as to what conscience does. The supernatural idea of it has been that it is a distinct command of God, bidding or forbidding man to do some particular thing. There can be no more confusing mistake than this. Conscience, except in the lowest sense, is no voice of God; it makes no infallible judgments. The moral sense upon which it plays is indeed like the artistic sense. Its judgments in any particular man may be quite erroneous, like his judgments upon artistic values. He may have an immature or false or depraved moral sense—quite like some men's æsthetic taste. Why is it that the Hindu mother, like Jephthah in the ancient story, thinks it a duty to sacrifice her child. Why is it that the Scotch or New England Sabbatarians judged it wicked to drive on Sunday, and felt the actual stings of conscience for indulging in laughter on that day? Lutheran and Romanist Christians saw no sin in the same acts. Surely the voice of God cannot contradict itself in different men!

There are two valid elements in what men call a decision of conscience. One element is intellectual; the other is emotional. All forms of sensibility have their roots in the mind. Consider for a moment the analogy of the art of music. A child is learning to be a pianist. He begins with a more or less vague and uncultivated musical sense. He has a rude sense of discords, and also of simple melodies. But his understanding and enjoyment of the higher order of musical works will depend on a certain intellectual discipline, and on the quality of his mind. By and by he will judge and choose between various musical values; he will pronounce some works bad and others good. Two elements will enter into these judgments, thought and feeling, never indeed far apart in man's life, but yet distinct forms

of activity. Given the most perfect musical genius, with trained intellect and at the same time rich artistic sensibility, you will have accurate judgments of musical value. What is more, this man, if himself a musician, will keep the laws of musical expression; he will perforce do artistic work. It will hurt his feelings to play bad music, or to play out of tune. You cannot bribe him to degrade his musical gifts to unworthy uses. His devotion to musical ideals will be a form of religion. In his highest artistic moments he is a citizen of an ideal universe.

Now the same distinction holds between moral feeling and moral thought or judgment. The child begins with vague and untrained moral feeling. The susceptibility is present; the child easily and instinctively feels the discord of an injustice. Conscience, if not wholly a social feeling, is closely and always related to the social sense. In the home or in the tribe, or between one man and another, there is always the social nexus. The child is conscious of being in or out of this social tie. Injustice, hate, blows, murder, injure this sense and make moral discord.

The child grows and develops. His intellect acts and reacts upon the facts of moral experience. He comes into sight of the laws and the moral ideals of his age and community. He dares to revise the standard codes of his childhood; he finds new codes in Japan and China, as he finds strange forms of art. His reason sets aside moral prohibitions which it once stung him to disregard. His reason adds higher and more difficult requirements. We are tracing now the course of a normal development of the moral sense. We are leaving out those cases where the growing child, finding the code too severe for his strength, or under stress of great temptation, blunts the edge of his conscience and loses the power of nice discrimination.

Given now the best type of man, broad in his thought, fine in his judgments, well equipped and experienced in the moral history of the race, this man's judgments like the good musician's, will approach an infallible standard. Moral feeling also will match and re-enforce his judgments and he will do whatever

his conscience bids. Moral discord will be odious and impossible for him. Moral harmony will become his nature.

We have the clew to understand the meaning of both elements in the action of conscience. We conceive that the universe is founded on thought; all its manifold relations establish an intellectual order and unity. We agree as to what this order is, or ought to be, in the life of the individual. His life ought to be the expression of good will, shown in all his acts and words, using as its channel all his activities. All the codes and commandments, so far as they are valid, are simply forms throughout which good will expresses itself towards one's fellows. This is individual righteousness. The ideal of social righteousness is a society, wherein all men shall have the largest possible opportunity, through the use of their labor, through their skill, through the wealth and powers of the world, through arts and literature, through closer social relations, to express their good will to each other. This ideal, like a grand symphony, is the work of the mind; it seems to be the the mind of man entering into and sharing the thought of God. All ethical judgments are instances of approach toward this ideal of human welfare. What is right? What is duty, or what ought we to do? That is right, as we can easily see in detail, which expresses humanity and promotes the interests of humanity. That is right, and, once seen as right, becomes duty, which adds to the social welfare. The attitude of good will is the highest form of right.

What now shall we say of the strange sense of *ought*—the feeling which matches and attends all moral judgments. It will not let us alone till we do whatever the moral sense pronounces right. Is this anything more than a sort of social pressure, the feeling of what one's neighbors or one's group may demand of us? This social pressure is in it, but it does not constitute it, any more than one's neighbors' impressions of art account for the artistic sense. This sense rises constantly quite above the average taste of the group, and even urges new standards of beauty before they are yet popular. So man's moral sense continually dictates, as we have seen, new modes of

conduct in the teeth of prejudice and popular clamor, and prophesies moral advantage beyond any man's sight.

This urgency, this pressure, this unrest in presence of untried duty is like a life force. If there is any life higher than man's in the universe, this urgency must arise out of the depths of this greater Life. If there is "a Power that makes for Righteousness," then conscience belongs to that Power. If all thought is of God, then the pressure of conscience is also of Him. What is power in any form, except the life of the Universe?

There is no inerrancy however in the urgency of conscience any more than in any other instinct or hunger. As the light is turned and refracted and loses its brightness in penetrating a faulty piece of glass, so the force of conscience suffers refraction and loss in an ignorant, prejudiced or selfish mind. It marks a tendency or direction. It follows the naive traditions of childhood, and the sanctions of society; it takes the quite human and natural channels made for it. It pushes and urges toward the light, as the sunshine compels the tiny plant to stretch on its appointed way upwards. It tends, if obeyed, to enlarge and purify the flow of the life. It ever reaches forward into the region of intelligence. It is never at rest till it becomes one with the judgment, and also with love and happiness. It presses toward unity and harmony. When reason says that an act is right, when love demands it, conscience then becomes irresistible to compel it. Happiness or satisfaction naturally follows it.

The divine Good Will is like an infinite line. Man's life is an asymptote, proceeding out of the ground of selfishness, but ever urged by the way of an almighty curve to come up into the higher regions and approach complete parallelism with the will of God. Man's happiness, the happiness of the race, is to be in accord with the Life of God. Each new motion of this approach gives new satisfaction. Each new sense of the gap between the ideal and the reality bring fresh unrest. The unrest compels fresh endeavor and promises new gladness. So by a rhythmic movement man's life approaches fulfillment.

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